

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, OVIP (PRESIDENT LEONE), IT

SUBJECT: PROPOSED BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY SECRETARY KISSINGER

FOR ITALIAN MEDIA

SUMMARY: BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY SECRETARY FOR
ITALIAN MEDIA COVERING LEONE VISIT WOULD BE EXTREMELY
HELPFUL IN DEALING WITH SERIOUS AND GROWING CONCERN
HERE REGARDING ITALY'S NATO INVOLVEMENT AND US CREDIBILITY.
END SUMMARY.

PRESIDENT LEONE'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES COMES
AT A TIME OF RISING SPECULATION AND CONCERN OVER NATO'S
FUTURE AND ITALY'S ROLE IN IT. SUCH CONCERN IS BY NO
MEANS CONFINED TO TRADITIONAL OPPONENTS OF NATO, SINCE
THERE IS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT AMONG ITALIAN POLITICAL
CIRCLES THAT RELOCATION OF ANY NATO BASES TO ITALY AT
THIS TIME WOULD HAVE SERIOUS POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS
FOR RULING COALITION. NEVERTHELESS, UNDERLYING
IMPORTANCE OF ITALY TO NATO AND VICE VERSA IS NOT
GETTING FULL AIRING HERE BECAUSE OF STORM OF CURRENT
SPECULATION ARISING FROM RECENT MEDITERRANEAN
DEVELOPMENTS.

THIS SITUATION FURTHER COMPLICATED BY EXTREMELY
CRITICAL COMMENTS IN PRESS OVER ALLGED US ENGINEERING
OF COUP WHICH TOPPLED ALLENDE IN CHILE: ITALIAN LEFT
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IDENTIFIES STRONGLY AND EMOTIONAL WITH CHILEAN LEFT.

NY TIMES ARTICLE ALLEGING CIA INVOLVEMENT IMPACTED IN
ITALIAN MEDIA ON FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF CHILEAN COUP WHICH
ADDED CONSIDERABLE FORCE TO ALREADY SUBSTANTIAL SPATE
OF ANNIVERSARY ARTICLES CARRIED BY LEFTAOF-CENTER PRESS.
THE RESULT IS THAT WE ARE ONCE AGAIN IN SITUATION WHERE
US CREDIBILITY AND MOTIVATIONS ARE BEING CALLED INTO
QUESTION. WE EXPECT SUCH QUESTIONING TO BE INCREASINGLY
STRIDENT AND CRITICAL. FOR THESE REASONS, A BACKGROUND
BRIEFING BY THE SECRETARY WHICH WOULD INCLUDE MOST OF
THE LEADING ITALIAN JOURNALISTS WHO INTERPRET AMERICA
TO ITALY WOULD BE A MOST SALUTARY EVENT. THE ANTICIPATED
NUMBER WOULD BE ABOUT 35, BUT COULD BE MADE SMALLER IF
THIS TOO UNWIELDY. EMBASSY FEELS STRONGLY THAT SESSION
WITH SECRETARY EMPHASIZING BASIC SECURITY QUESTIONS WHICH
AFFECT ITALY AS WELL AS SUBSTANTIVE DIRECTION US FOREIGN
POLICY WOULD HELP REASSURE FRIENDS THAT WE MAKING
CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOLUTIONS OF BASIC PROBELMS.
WOULD ALSO BE EFFECTIVE REJOINDER TO US CRITICS WHO
EFFECTIVELY QUESTIONING US CREDIBILITY AND ARE ONCE AGAIN
CRANKING UP FOR A FIELD DAY AT OUR EXPENSE.
FINALLY--AND FAR FROM LEAST--A CLEAR DELINEATION
OF US CONTINUED CONCERN REGARDING SOVIET THREAT WOULD
IMPLY USEFUL SIGNALS TO BE MIXED INTO ITALIAN POLITICAL
DEBATE ON POSSIBLE EVENTUAL ENTRY OF COMMUNISTS INTO
GOVERNMENT. VOLPE

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